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ABSTRACT

This document reports on the Association for Community Based Education's (ACBE's) 14th annual conference. The first section is an introduction by the conference co-coordinators. The other sections describe conference sessions on the following subjects: (1) ACBE's literacy program; (2) advocacy methods, models, and resource development; (3) the concept of culture and an examination of participants' cultural backgrounds; (4) what kind of economic development training is appropriate, what training is available, and the role ACBE might play in providing training opportunities; (5) the role of native language in community-based education; (6) how to run a small business and how to place entrepreneurial efforts in the context of a community-based education process; (7) how community-based organizations can integrate writing into their programs; (8) worker education from historical, community-based, and union perspectives; and (9) future initiatives for community leadership, including professional development, institutional performance and student outcome evaluation, and program and institutional support. (CML)

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CBE Report

A Special Conference Issue

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December 31, 1989 Vol. VIII No. 24

Contents

ACBE's Literacy Program: Reflections for the Future	2
Advocacy for Change	5
Building Community Through the Arts	7
Economic Development: A Planning Session	9
Native Language Literacy	12
Small Business Development	15
Writing	17
Workers' Education	19
Future Initiatives	21
Survey Results	28

"We came, we shared, we grew. ACBE provides this basic, needed, and wonderful experience each year."

The Association for Community Based Education held its 14th annual conference October 11-14, 1989 in Bethesda, Maryland. **Investing in People: Community Based Education and Development,** brought together educators, social activists, policy-makers, and adult learners to network, explore issues and develop strategies for their work in literacy, economic development, community based colleges, and indigenous leadership development.

Over 20 workshops were offered during the three-day conference. This report highlights some of the longer sessions. Due to limited people resources, we regret not being able to report on all of the sessions; we recognize that some very dynamic work occurred that is not reported on here. If you attended a workshop and it enhanced your conceptual approach and/or ability to do the work of a community based educator, please write us about it. We welcome the opportunity to share your feedback with others in the field and find it very useful to our planning efforts for next year's conference.

Many thanks to the people that made this report possible because of their studious notetaking: Kiran Chaudhuri, Sue Goodwin, Ed Greenberg, and Elizabeth Rangel. Another volunteer who helped keep the conference running smoothly was Leonardo Escobar.

The conference would not have been possible without the workshop leaders and participants whose commitment, varied experience, creativity, and willingness to share with each other resulted in a dynamic, thought-provoking dialogue about who we are, what we do, how we do it, and how we might do it better.

Tracy McDonald and Elizabeth Smolcic
Conference Co-coordinators

Association for Community Based Education, 1806 Vernon Street NW, Washington, DC 20009, 202-462-6333

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ACBE's Community Based Literacy Program: Reflections for the Future

In this workshop participants took a close look at three areas of ACBE's Literacy Program: (1) training and the process of staff development; (2) minigrants and the process of strengthening programs; and (3) the evaluation program and the process of demonstrating impacts. ACBE staff, Kiran Chaudhuri and Gregg Jackson, and ACBE trainer, Hilary Stern, facilitated the session. Several participants from community based groups who are directly involved in the three activities related their hands-on experiences and perspective from the field.

Training & Professional Development

Since the fall of 1988, ACBE has conducted 23 Literacy for Empowerment training workshops at community based organizations across the country. Reflecting on the work of the past year, positive and negative aspects of the training program were discussed. The session ended with recommendations for the future of the program. Some positive observations mentioned in regard to the ACBE Literacy Training are listed below.

* an opportunity to network
* a chance for reflection
* evaluation of teacher-administrator relations
* a way to observe and participate in a training model which can be applied by an individual in her/his own context
* multiple agencies collaborating to sponsor training
* a chance for practitioners to acknowledge their own expertise--self-sufficiency among practitioners
* candid, honest sharing about expertise
* a week was enough time to experience the Freirian process
* enabled the rare collaboration of ESL programs
* follow-up training really had an impact
* one whole week of training was good
* the ACBE handbook is helpful
* integrated issues of justice into literacy work
* technical assistance on methods of alternative evaluation were very useful

The group also identified areas in which they felt improvements could be made in the training program. In planning for the training, it was suggested that ACBE provide more assistance to local groups in marketing the training workshops to ensure greater participation in that locality. It was also suggested that more care be exercised in choosing the physical space where the training is held. Someone felt that the $200 fee for a three day workshop was too much.

The need to incorporate ACBE training into the agency's regular training schedule, so that it doesn't compete with formal staff development was identified. Also, in trainings of coalitions, there is a need for more time to enable homogenous groups to get together.

Emphasizing an intent to train practitioners as professionals, it was suggested that the following changes be made in the training program. First, scheduling the training on weekends is awkward and the local groups should arrange for training during the

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week. Childcare expenses for workshop participants should be provided and trainees need to be offered stipends.

More global recommendations for professional development among community based practitioners included the following:

* Financial support for local practitioners to train each other. "We could create a wonderful, viable model of community based education ourselves, if given this kind of financial support and technical assistance. Then we could share this model in other places."
* A professional association of practitioners is needed.
* Accreditation/certification should be a result of the training. This could include college credit for accomplishing certification.
* The training model should validate and support practitioners as professionals, both in its goals and in its process.
* The development of a barter system for peer technical assistance on the local level, would be a way to get assistance without stretching already thin budgets.
* Financial support and technical assistance over the period of a year would enable the institutionalization of the results of the training program.

Minigrants

Since 1977, ACBE has provided small grants to help community based organizations improve their programs and demonstrate exemplary practices. A total of forty minigrants were awarded to literacy programs in 1987 and 1988. Some positive observations on the minigrant program are:

* the minigrant assistance provided time and occasion for reflection and curriculum design
* the "no strings attached" grant is a statement of respect for CBO's and allows the freedom to design the project
* the minigrant acted as the "nudge" to take the time to do something you had wanted to do, but hadn't been able to focus on
* it was a relief to have the salary of one site coordinator taken care of by the ACBE minigrant
* the minigrant provided seed money for innovative programming (Bronx Educational Services: theatre-literacy process). This programming is now institutionalized as a result of ACBE.

Some recommendations and specific needs that the minigrant program might better meet in the future include:

* the need to be informed of selection process criteria, and to get more feedback when turned down
* the need to be more in touch with other agencies doing the same thing
* establishing a process of peer review for final products
* more direction and guidance, providing technical assistance along with funding
* fund the publication and dissemination of results of minigrant projects

Evaluation

During 1988-89, ACBE designed an evaluative process to identify the elements of good practice and to better understand the impact of community based programs. The on-site evaluation of nine ACBE member literacy programs assessed participant

self-esteem, self-directedness and community involvement, as well as reading, writing and math skills.

In reference to the recently completed evaluations participants cited the following advantages: they found some substantial gains in learner outcomes, including some that were unexpected by staff; they identified areas of weakness that have already led to adjustments in the programs; they affirmed what was known instinctively; the results can be used in future fundraising; and the process increased self-esteem of participants by reflecting upon the progress of their programs.

The negative aspects of the evaluations were: there was a restricted list of outcomes from which program administrators could select for measurement; the evaluations didn't attempt to measure some important, but nebulous outcomes; the instrument measuring writing did not measure the kinds of writing stressed by several of the programs; aura of "testing" was hard to dispel and the process felt like an intrusion to some learners; the local staff learned little from the process of data collection because most of it was planned and done by ACBE staff; the seven month evaluation was too short to measure achievement of the learners' personal goals; and the evaluations were not a consciousness raising experience for the learners because they did not participate in planning or developing the evaluation process--they were instead treated as objects for study.

Suggestions for future evaluation were as follows:

* the evaluation process should be more learner-centered, less threatening, less disruptive, and a more integral part of the classroom and tutoring experience
* assess how effective the programs are in helping the learners to achieve their own goals
* develop group dialogue assessment methods, perhaps similar to focus groups
* help local programs develop instruments appropriate to their specific learners and situations
* measure critical thinking and problem solving
* work more on reducing learners' test-anxiety
* find ways that learners can participate in developing assessment procedures
* facilitate learners' skills in self-assessment and in the critique of their program and teachers
* make use of daily living materials such as bills and school notices in the evaluations
* assess impacts on the community building process
* assess impacts on the community being served by the program--its economic conditions and quality of life
* study how participation in literacy programs and the development that accompanies it may alienate the learners from their families, friends, and communities
* do follow-up studies of what happens to learners after they leave the programs

Advocacy for Change

Community based organizations are a source of assistance and support for communities in areas of education, economic development, community organizing and personal empowerment. Of equal importance are the efforts of CBOs to change the social conditions that inhibit individual and community growth. The **Advocacy for Change** workshop focused on advocacy methods, models, and resource development. The workshop was facilitated by Mark Rosenman, Director of the Union Institute of the Center for Public Policy in Washington, D.C.

The Center for Public Policy is involved with five major projects:

(1) Trying to get funders to look at problems in context such as teen pregnancy in terms of the causes and consequences;
(2) Working to strengthen state non-profit associations;
(3) A project which encourages youth to be more philanthropic;
(4) Conducting evaluations of foundations; and
(5) Non-profit advocacy which includes struggling against government efforts to undermine non-profit advocacy.

Mark stressed that the public must understand that advocacy and public interest work are essential elements of democracy. Unfortunately, public interest is at its lowest and there is a need to generate more awareness and involvement. Political parties cannot be relied on to increase citizen participation.

> Non-profit organizations are creative. In the face of a new social problem, we develop responses that stretch resources in remarkable ways. Unfortunately, in our haste to be of service, we often fail to recognize the true and sometimes mundane causes of the problems .... Nonprofits respond innovatively and effectively, but we do so in ways that treat symptoms and give little or no attention to their source.
>
> Mark Rosenman
> Chronicle of Philanthropy, Jan. 1989

The First Step

The first step for an agency that wants to get involved in advocacy work is to get a good lawyer, one who understands your work and will help you achieve your mission statement. And those mission statements, Rosenman noted, must go beyond the day to day reality and look at the cause/root of the problem. For those that find the costs of legal counsel prohibitive consider contacting your local legal aid office for advice or neighborhood law firms for pro-bono assistance.

Public Policy: Part of the Problem?

In the case of the present homeless crisis, we must look at why we have high numbers of homeless, in addition to the question of what to do with them. Mark suggested that a temporary measure might include providing less services for the homeless in order to understand and attack the root of the problem. The homeless situation has become institutionalized. He also noted that there is a very clear causal effect between policy decisions and social problems. There is a need for the population at large and CBO constituencies to become more aware and understand the implications of policy decisions.

What Can A Non-profit Do?

Non-profits are allowed to spend 20% of their resources on lobbying. Five percent of that 20% can be used for grassroots lobbying. Non-profits may also offer testimony if solicited, offer model legislation, encourage voter education and registration.

Mark commented that non-profits will never keep up with trying to meet the needs of those they are servicing without changing the structure which creates and maintains groups of disenfranchised people. Unfortunately, many funders are afraid of the word advocacy, but there are small progressive funders and these sources should be tapped. If your main purpose is advocacy, CBOs should consider getting 501(c)(4) status. It is possible for groups to obtain both 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4).

Networking

The following is a starter list of organizations that are involved in advocacy work and creating legislation:

Center for Law and Social Policy, 1616 P Street NW #350, Washington DC 20036, 202-328-5140;

Coalition on Human Needs, 1000 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Washington DC 20007, 202-342-0726;

National Neighborhood Coalition, 20 F Street NW, Washington DC 20001, 202-628-9600;

National Congress for Community Economic Development, 1612 K Street NW, Washington DC 20006, 202-659-8411;

National Women's Law Center, 1616 P Street NW #100, Washington DC 20036, 202-328-5160.

There are also a number of support and advocacy agencies such as:

Children's Defense Fund, 122 C Street NW, Washington DC 20001, 202-628-8787, and the

Food Research and Action Center, 1319 F Street NW, Washington DC 20004, 202-393-5060.

Building Community and Individual Empowerment Through the Arts

Jane Sapp, long-time ACBE friend, performer and educator, led the group in looking at our cultural experiences. The discussion focused on who we are, where we come from, and how that affects us individually, and as community based educators. Participants reflected on the concept of culture, examined their cultural background, and shared that culture with the others in the group.

In answer to the question, What is Culture?, we said:

Something else than what I know

Sense of history and continuity

Family

Cornfield in the fall

Food, nurturing, laboring, living together

History and creativity

Inherit and recreate

Common spirit

World view

Carry from generation to generation--food, music, behavior

Perspective on life--how you live your life

Way of life

Things you do that make sense out of the world

sense of humor

Participants were then invited to talk about their culture--the many elements that helped to shape who we are. People spoke in terms of economic class, work, sex roles, education, ethnicity and race, church/religion, geographic location, stories, personal and national history.

What one thing of our culture would we throw away if we could?

Outrage

Nothing

Reluctance to share

Taking for granted

Need for safety

Sense of no choices

Criticism of other cultures

My own stereotypes and assumptions

Powerlessness

Frustration about being on the receiving end of stereotypes

Dullness and lack of excitement

Insensitivity

Distrust of the rest of the world

Fear of being killed

Uprootedness

Drive to be perfect (too much pressure)

What one thing would you keep of your culture?

Knowledge that comes from knowing other cultures

Strength--inner core

Diversity

Stories--my link to who I am

Stories and bones

Sense of wonderment

Sense of belonging

Awareness of possibilities

Caring for others

Pride in difference

Sense of humor

Getting lost

Conversation--holds possibilities

Creativity--using your voice

Celebration is taking power

Bonding

What is Creativity

Jane then talked about creativity. Creativity is using your voice, in whatever way; when you use your voice you name yourself--continuing your culture(s). Dance, song, poetry--creativity--is "a peoples space to respond to their everyday realities."

Jane put forth some questions many of us will continue to think on:

What does culture mean in terms of transforming society?

How do you express your culture in the work you currently do?

If you had a community based program that was culturally based, what would it look like?

How would it be different from the program where you currently work?

Economic Development: A Planning Session

With community based organizations becoming more involved in local economic development there is a growing need for expertise and leadership. In this brainstorming session, Economic Development Training: A Planning Session, participants considered what kind of training is appropriate, what training is currently available, and the role ACBE might play in providing training opportunities.

The discussion was broken down into two sections: the philosophical questions that would shape the ideal economic development training program; and the logistical elements (format, curriculum, required infrastructure, training, etc.). Participants started out by offering definitions of economic development:

- Economic literacy
- Any effort that has a dollar outcome or generates financial resources
- Income generating activities that are externally imposed on a community, and those which are internally developed
- Any effort which creates jobs and has community-wide ripple effects
- The development of human and financial capital; natural resources; land--all of which incur a benefit to the people.

How Is Community Based Economic Development Different

Community based economic development (CBED), on the other hand, answers the questions of how people control labor and capital and of who makes the decisions to develop the community. Unlike traditional economic development for which the primary concern is to create profits, CBED was defined as an effort to generate wealth that serves, rather than flows out of a community.

A brief debate ensued about the nature of greed and its role in distinguishing CBED from more generic economic development. One participant stated that greed is an individual phenomenon and that CBED attempts to coordinate individual desires with community needs. Another participant argued that greed is not at all an individual phenomenon; there is ample evidence of countries and societies that operate on greed and oppress others, and that we cannot assume that a community-based effort is free of this impulse.

It was concluded that in the ideal, organizations balance the needs of individuals and those of the community as well as distinguishing (more generally) true needs from desires, and from greed. This balance determines the value system which drives economic development. From this debate, participants took the understanding that skills accumulation is different from values: learning the tools of entrepreneurship is not necessarily "bad", but the applications of those skills may well be.

More Than Job Creation

In pursuing economic development, CBOs do not necessarily have to engage in job-creation activities. CBOs can play the role of linking larger, mainstream institutions to do a better job of serving the community. In addition, CBOs can pressure mainstream institutions beyond the status quo.

CBOs which choose to perform income-generating functions can learn from corporate models without imitating their bad habits. However, participants cited examples of pressure by bankers and funders to give up what we believe in order to create more profit and be "more efficient." CBOs also sabotage our own efforts by underselling ourselves. Rather than insisting on measures of success which include our goals (environmental impact, empowerment, and democratic management), CBOs too often let bankers use more rigid accounting and evaluation systems.

Integrating Economic Development with Education

At the outset, participants identified two types of education: (1) community and cultural education, and (2) school learning, both of which are critical to CBED. Several participants argued that there is a false distinction made between education and economic development; if done properly, both activities reinforce one another; if done poorly, both can draw resources and people away from the community. The real trick of education and economic development is to retain and reintegrate educated and skilled people back into their community of origin.

The first principle of any combined education-economic development effort is to start with people where they are by accepting differences in culture, education, and values. Genuine economic literacy includes discussing inequality, capitalism, and power; we must help disenfranchised people understand why they are poor and their voices unheard.

Building Internal Capacity

In referring back to the original questions of how CBOs can boost their internal capacity for CBED, we asked what it is that CBOs need in order to begin an economic development process. The resounding response was that CBOs need visionaries much more than they need technical expertise. Visionaries are the people who are continually coming up with ideas and who can galvanize community support. Vision was defined as leadership, having a global analysis, and the ability to move one's self and others beyond the here and now. Ideally, the force that drives CBED comes not from a single charismatic individual but from a group process, drawing on the perspective of each community person. Participants agreed that it is possible to train people in this direction and offered a range of methodologies:

- Begin with gathering information about the community: elicit stories about the work and skills of each family member
- Start with education, not skills building
- Start by getting people to participate in analyzing community needs and identifying problems
- Explore a discussion of what the "perfect community" would look like
- Link economic development projects with social and cultural projects
- Develop the community's information base about non-corporate economic activities
- Begin an analysis of the power balance and power relationship in the community
- Train people in groups, rather than as individuals; build interdependence

If properly done, the outcome of training would be new leaders that return to the community, not as divided individuals, but with a sense of being contributors in a collective. There would be more ownership of decision making, especially around the issue of what are "good" economic development projects. In the long run, young people would know their own language and culture and feel good enough about

themselves that it would be unnecessary to leave their communities or reservations for training. In the short run, it is possible for an outside training entity to bring to a community a process for thinking about economic issues and building leadership.

What Exists, What is the Infrastructure, How Does it Operate

Finally, participants explored some of what is offered by existing economic development training and technical assistance groups. Among the groups represented at the session were The Development Training Institute, Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC), First Nations Financial Project, Producir, and the Rural Leadership Development Network (RLDN). First Nations, RLDN, and FSC share a methodology in that they make a long-term commitment to the organizations they serve. They believe that short-term economic development projects are unrealistic and that a great deal of time is needed to plan economic development projects.

All representatives agreed that it is difficult to guide community based development because of societal pressures. One participants suggested that ACBE's role can be to: credential graduates of training programs; systematize what training is offered; act as conduit for funds; and exchange information and knowledge among organizations in the ACBE membership and network.

The session continued the next day as participants discussed the ideal economic development training program and some logistical considerations.

Format: a long-term (3 years) intensive, on-site plan. Including opportunities for practical application of skills. Training offered to trainers, organizational staff, and grassroots leaders.

Curriculum: Part 1 should be an examination of what economic development is, followed by a history of the CBED movement and case studies of successes and failures. The curriculum would then move to community research, goal setting, and identifying values. Finally there would be a basic skills component (financing, ventures, marketing, management, etc.).

Trainers: These would include CBED practitioners, grassroots activists, professional trainers, and institutional faculty.

Infrastructure: Aside from seeking the traditional sources of venture capital, organizations might be trained to set up peer group lending mechanisms (similar to a revolving loan fund).

What Can ACBE Do?

The consensus of the participants was that the best role ACBE can play are those of (1) advocacy and (2) coordinating the existing resources for economic literacy and skills building. There are a sufficient number of groups that are doing good, but segmented work. CBOs need guidance in locating resources and ACBE can either provide the guidance, or do the difficult task of packaging various resources into a cohesive program of training for its members. Advocacy would include instructing funders about the marriage between education and economic development; impressing the need for economic literacy work; and creating a public policy environment that supports alternative economic development.

The Role of Native Language in Community Based Education

Political, economic and social factors in the U.S. today are pushing immigrants and refugees into a disenfranchised class of people who cannot read or write in either their first or second languages, but can speak enough English to get cleaning jobs. If the field of adult education sees itself as part of the solution to this problem rather than as a contributor to the formation of this class of economically exploited people, then it must prioritize native language literacy. This session was facilitated by Klaudia Rivera, Educational Consultant, NY.

Programs located in multicultural communities and serving more than one language group cannot easily teach native language literacy, and this is a serious problem. If they do attempt a native language program, they draw learners mainly from that language group or from particular ethnic neighborhoods within a city, so that they contribute to divisions within the community.

Learners' Resistance

Another difficulty is that learners often resist learning in their own languages. There are many reasons why people feel they need to learn English. Languages have status within a society, and are spoken by groups which carry different amounts of political weight. We need to talk openly within our programs about these issues. We need to ask who speaks a particular language and what opportunities are available to one who speaks that language. Talking about this issue with learners in class is one way to help them reflect on their reasons for focusing on English. Another way is to teach about the linguistic research that shows that learning to read and write in the native language facilitates the learning of literacy skills in other languages. Finally, the best recruiters are people who have learned English and have found it useful to learn to read and write in their own language first.

But the struggle that we really need to put our energy into is to fight the English-only political lobby and the local, state and federal government funding sources that support it. Our aim is to help build a movement to create native language programs in local communities.

The following are some generally held beliefs about language acquisition that are used in an argument for English-only programs.

MYTH #1: The more time a person is immersed in a language, the more they will learn.

This is not true. Factors such as the uses the person has for that language, her relationships with speakers of that language, and the quality of instruction also influence what a person learns. Also important are the socioeconomic situation of the learner and the status the language is assigned in the learner's community and in the larger society. The fact that many immigrants and refugees come to this country because the political situations in their own countries have left them few or no alternatives can also figure in their feelings about learning English.

MYTH #2: Bilingual education is not successful. It is not an efficient method of teaching people English, and that is what people need.

On the contrary, as James Cummins a Canadian researcher has demonstrated, we never learn to read twice. When an individual learns to read in her/his first language, the knowledge about language and the reading process become stored knowledge that she/he uses to learn to read (or speak) a second language. If we have learned to read in our first language, then reading in the second language requires learning to decode, but it does not require relearning the reading process. Skills such as finding the main idea, getting important details, developing images, predicting outcomes, sequences and following directions are learned only once. Learning to read the history of our own communities in our native languages provides the linguistic groundwork for further learning in the second language.

Second, we learn through our strengths, not our weaknesses. In our print-oriented society, literacy improves self-image. If a person can learn to read and write in her own language with fewer obstacles, then s/he will have more self-esteem to draw on in learning the second language.

Third, for people to take charge of their education and participate more fully in programs, they need to be able to do it in their own languages.

Workshop participants engaged in a brainstorming session which resulted in a set of needs as well as specific steps that cbo's and ACBE could take in support of native language literacy programs.

Needs of the Field

Political Organizing

Local coalition building for political purposes.

National policies, legislation, and funding in support of native language education.

Legislative representation.

Regional political action to fight English-only politics.

Native language practitioners need to organize formally. A national meeting would be a first step in this process.

Fact sheets in Spanish on demographic and educational statistics, and on political strategies for fighting the English-only movement.

National groups, including ACBE, need to acknowledge and understand diversity of language groups and classes. Also, we need to recognize differences and similarities among people of any one cultural group.

Practice

Establish regional and local support networks on practice.

Document programs that are working well.

Make available information on underlying principles of native language literacy, for use in writing funding proposals, lobbying policy makers, and recruiting learners, as well as in teaching and learning.

Challenge bias against leaders and teachers who are "informally" educated.

A coordinator to collect and disseminate native language materials.

Steps we can take as community based practitioners and as members of ACBE

Send legislative news to ACBE's Community Based Education Report (CBER) Newsletter.

Organize as ACBE members and advocate that ACBE lobby for native language education and against English-only politics.

Recommend that ACBE provide training for community members to become teachers.

Recommend that ACBE's literacy and economic development programming reflect a commitment to native language education.

Ask ACBE to make sure more learners are at next year's conference.

Establish working partnerships between community based organizations for the purpose of peer technical assistance.

Recommend that ACBE fund the creation of native language materials through its Minigrant Program.

Translate ACBE's Literacy for Empowerment: A Resource Handbook for Community Based Educators into Spanish.

Add section to ACBE Handbook that consists of materials from native language programs, in Spanish and in other languages.

Small Business Development: Where Does It Belong?

Entrepreneurship and small business development are considered the building blocks of capitalism, but the requirements for success sometimes clash with the social or political agendas of community based organizations. In this workshop, participants examined the nuts and bolts of running a small business and how to place entrepreneurial efforts in the context of a the community based educational process. The session was facilitated by Colleen O'Connell and Marilyn Wood (Community Women's Education Project, Philadelphia, PA); Sherry Salway (First Nations Financial Project, VA); Richard Schramm (Center for Management and Community Development, Tufts University, MA).

The group began by listing the elements it considers intrinsic to traditional business:

- board of directors
- profit
- growth
- production
- markets
- innovation
- domination
- meeting demand
- creating demand
- beating the competition
- leveraging money
- bottom-line
- stockholder interests
- specialization for efficiency
- cash flow
- human resources
- high technology
- reducing overhead
- need for skills
- fiscal projections
- budgets
- owners interests
- hierarchical management
- feasibility
- entrepreneurial
- research and development

The elements the group considered intrinsic to community based economic development (CBED) were then discussed:

- meeting overhead/breaking even
- alternative fundraising
- ventures in line with mission
- worker-owner cooperatives
- profit motive
- cooperation more than competition
- shared profits
- self-sufficiency
- board of directors
- cash flow
- business as a training ground for skills, leadership
- coalition building and coordination
- political participation
- generating income for community members
- human development
- long-term
- community research
- job creation
- keeping dollars in the community
- market in harmony with needs
- no exploitative markets
- "Green" values
- people over profits
- demystifying economics
- integrating CBED into larger community
- piggybacking--building on what already exists
- strengthening community infrastructure

While there are very clear areas of overlap between traditional management and CBED, CBED operates with a different set of motives and goals than traditional business development. The tension comes when CBOs are competing for resources in a marketplace that rewards some of the very practices that CBED shuns--labor

exploitation, hierarchical management, the accumulation of capital for its own sake (greed), and the exportation of profits.

In an example taken from personal experience, one of the facilitators outlined the evolution of a family-owned toy store from a community-oriented business to a corporate-owned subsidiary. At its inception, the toy store was a small venture, run out of the owner's home, that specialized in high quality, locally produced toys. All of the typical expenses of running a business (wages, rent, advertising, utilities, telephone, insurance, accounting, taxes, legal services, interest, etc.) accrued to local merchants and services. Profits were small. Following an offer to sell to an out-of-state corporation, the "excess" labor was removed and profits increased, but almost none of the revenues or expenses accrued to the community. It was "more efficient" to run the business in this way, but offered less benefit to the community.

In other stories of conflict, participants discussed:

- The difficulty of balancing cost-efficiency (giving the most challenging tasks to the most highly skilled persons) and educational goals (assigning challenging tasks to persons who need the most practice in order to learn skills);

- The fact that underbidding is the only way to "get into the game," but it is also a way to sabotage the enterprise that is already undercapitalized;

- The difficulty of a small staff performing all of the functions required to run a business and a CBO simultaneously (one facilitator suggested devoting one person exclusively to the marketing tasks because, in the long run, this will generate more resources to both the business venture and the CBO than any other effort).

Starting a Community Based Business

In the second part of the workshop, participants outlined what is needed to start a community based business. The purpose of the list was to offer nuts and bolts information to CBOs that are still considering a profit-making venture. In addition, the list served as a refresher to CBOs already engaged in economic development. The most important distinction between traditional business and CBED is that CBED is vigilant in its commitment to group process and to the organization's original mission statement to serve the community. Some of the other required elements are:

* vision
* assessment of what people already do to earn money in the informal sector (source of ideas for microenterprises)
* money/capital that is of an appropriate size and knowledge of available technical assistance (research/assessment, management/organizational development, planning, method for training, marketing, financial management)
* skilled people
* cultural significance
* a facility/physical plant, equipment
* entrepreneurial talent/leadership
* support services (child care, transportation, etc.)
* infrastructure (sewers, roads, etc.)
* community-wide education
* board training and development

Writing

This workshop sought to explore ways that CBOs can integrate writing into their programs. It also explored a variety of participatory and engaging exercises for learners. Some of the key ideas behind these activities are described below. The session was facilitated by Nan Elsasser, an ACBE Literacy Trainer, and Director of the Working Classroom in New Mexico.

Writing for Empowerment Is:

1. Creative and transformative -- students explore sense of self in relation to their community, and the relationship of the community to larger political institutions; student improves self esteem
2. A never ending process
3. Focuses on content as well as structure

What We Write As Individuals

letters, dreams, calendar, memos, reports, stories, papers, lists, notes, proposals, news stories, editorials, forms, editing, journals, phone messages, ideas, recipes, plans. Try to think of a time when writing was transformational; when you did or saw something new in your writing.

What Students Write

essays, forms, paragraphs, newspapers, journals, experience stories, poems, copying, notes, practice worksheets, questionnaires, petitions, tests, letters, personal comments/reactions, names plays

EXERCISE: Diagnose you own programs by these criteria:

1. Is it creative and transformative
2. Process: how well does the writing process correspond with the goals of being creative and transformative? How well does the process respond to the goals of the student?
3. Content: What is creative and transformative?
4. Structure: how much? Is your focus on structure inhibiting writers, limiting content?

Below are examples of creative and transformative writing exercises.

EXERCISE: The Language Experience Approach

The Language Experience Approach is one where teachers or more advanced learners have low level learners tell them a story or experience. These are then written by the teacher or advanced student and later used to enhance vocabulary and reading skills. This activity is highly recommended for beginning and low level readers.

In looking over students' language experience stories note whether the same subjects show up repeatedly. For example, several students might note that they were late for something because there was no daycare. Use this as a starting point for discussion and writing activities about why there isn't more daycare.

EXERCISE: Free Writing

This is one of the best techniques to help learners get over initial "writers block". Have students start writing for a set period of time as fast as they can. Tell them not to stop and not to correct punctuation or grammar. Tell them to write whatever comes to mind. Normally, we let in safe, boring thoughts, but free writing cancels out that censoring process. Free writing enables students to finish first drafts quickly. Have each person volunteer to read a good word, phrase or sentence that came out of their free writing. Suggest that they cut out their favorite sentences and phrases and keep them in a book.

PROBLEM: How do you help people expand their writing without correcting?

Solution: Have the student read to a tutor or group (without interruption). Student rereads the piece and the group writes questions they would like answered. The group is then invited to stop the student with questions. The answers to these questions could then be incorporated into the student's writing. The less practiced the writer, the more questions raised. To get the process started it may be useful to start with your own writing or an outsider's writing.

Workers' Education

This session addressed worker education from historical, community based and union perspectives. Peter Simon of the Center for Working Life, CA, offered some insight into the present situation of workers' education through his description of the history of the movement in the U.S. Paula Finn, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, NY, described the union-based education program that she coordinates and Raul Anorve of California Literacy explained the principles of a workplace literacy program from the community based perspective. The presentations were followed by small group discussion.

It Began During the Early 1900s

Peter Simon began his historical overview noting that worker education is not new, although it has been labelled differently based on different historical periods and political agendas. The movement had its beginnings in the U.S. during the early 1900s. In 1906, the Rand School of Social Science was formed in New York City by the Socialist Party. The goal was a broad-based education required to create a new social order based on socialism. The Rand School provided educational services to two unions (ILGWU and ACWA) until they created their own programs in 1917 and 1919. The basic objective of worker education during this period (particularly the Rand School and the Workers School of the Communist Party) was to raise the consciousness of the working class, and to prepare them to act in bringing about a change in the social system.

By 1929, due to the financial constraints of the Depression and increasing labor-related legislation, the emphasis had begun to change from worker education to labor education. The basic objectives of this period were more immediately utilitarian, focusing on the practical needs of the trade union movement. While worker education focused on the need to create a new social order, the fundamental tenets of labor education were to promote harmony and cooperation between management and labor and "to enable the individual to get the best possible out of life regardless of the system we live under" (a union vice-president).

Following World War II, labor education began to broaden its scope. In the transitional period from 1950-67, while the objectives remained utilitarian, labor education programs began to train the individual worker to not only function in the labor-management situation, but also to be effective in the community and society.

Finally, near the end of the 1960s, labor education developed into labor studies, carried out by universities as a service to the labor movement in making available all aspects of higher education to trade unionists. With this period came an interest in credentialization. An increasingly technological society demanded not only a relevant education, but the credentials to go along with it. A 1974 meeting on universities' roles in workers' education defined the labor studies as "a means by which the trade unions could help the worker deal with his problems in his role as a producer, consumer and citizen."

Designing a Job-related Literacy Program

Raul Anorve, a community based literacy practitioner, provides literacy training based on the philosophy and problem-posing approach of Paulo Freire. Raul defines popular education as: 1) not formal, 2) thematic and investigative, 3) using participatory techniques, and 4) reflective composition, all based in a political context. That political context is based on the following assumptions: 1) illiteracy is not a choice, 2) poverty is not a choice, and 3) education is not based on form and content alone.

Raul works with literacy programs throughout California, including training with Chicano groups, Chumash Indians, and within workplace and rural settings. Through context-specific, content-based curricula, Raul is able to succeed in achieving two seemingly dichotomous goals--providing work-specific literacy skills to workers at the request of management, which sponsors the programs, and empowering workers through literacy and therefore education to become informed and empowered members of society enabled to effect social change.

Raul explained the process that he uses in designing a job-related literacy program. The program principles stated in proposing the literacy program to management are as follows.

- Teach basic skills using the content of specific jobs.
- Teach reading strategies that are appropriate to workplace needs.
- Build on the employee's prior knowledge of a job content area to teach new concepts.
- Customize the curriculum to suit the needs of the company and the specific jobs that must be done.
- Use hands-on job-related materials for instruction.
- State learning objectives clearly and explicitly as they relate to skills needed for the job performance.
- Include critical thinking skills as part of the curriculum.

A written summary of this process, guidelines for teachers about evaluation and a short bibliography on Workforce Literacy were handed out at the workshop and are available from ACBE.

A Union Program

Paula Finn, Director of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, Worker Education Program, administers literacy courses for more than 500 workers through the New York Consortium for Worker Education. With focus on the worker, immigrant rights, and grassroots leadership development, the program seeks to create conditions for corrective empowerment and social change.

Through the union's literacy program, Finn strives to confront and provide solutions for some of the problems facing workers today; these include: 1) Workers defining the goals and objectives of worker education. 2) Expanding the vision of the current "literacy" discussion through union-based education programs. 3) The role union-based programs can play in union building and union democratization. 4) The role union-based worker education programs can play in organizing non-unionized labor 5) Internal obstacles within the union structure that hinder the development of worker education.

The major part of this session was spent in small group discussion.

Future Initiatives for Community Leadership

On the last day of the conference, ACBE staff, trainers, board members, and conference participants met to discuss Future Initiatives for Community Leadership. The discussion was divided into three main areas of concern: (1) Professional Development, (2) Institutional Performance and Student Outcome Evaluation, and (3) Program and Institutional Support. Within each group people talked about specific problems, ideas and goals related to their program, and the field. Below are notes from the three discussion groups. Some of the recommendations for future initiatives were offered as options that programs and practitioners could undertake themselves or in concert with others, other recommendations were geared towards ways that ACBE could continue to provide support and leadership in the field.

Institutional Performance & Student Outcome Evaluation

CONCERNS

How to measure performance in incremental process?

How "testing" can be incorporated into an ongoing service process?

How can competencies "of daily living" be incorporated into service process?

How can "in-house" testing be standardized and validated? How do you evaluate learners that "fall between the cracks?" in skill levels?

Are there different evaluation considerations with regard to age, motivation and other background characteristics?

How do "daily living materials" (menus, bills,...) fit into evaluation process?

What testing materials are available for non-English speakers?

Are there differences in native backgrounds that effect testing levels (example: learners from different countries?)

How can testing take place in a non-disruptive, non-threatening manner?

How appropriate are our programs in meeting learners' needs? (job counseling, services, testing, materials, teachers)

What happens to our learners beyond our programs? (linkages, follow-up, transfer of learning)

How do we identify if/when learner has been served?

How do you measure larger issues as they relate to learners?

How can you measure "critical thinking," self-esteem?

How do we measure impact of programs on "poverty reduction/elimination"?

How do we establish relationships that "allow" for participation in evaluation?

How do our outreach efforts and general community support effect evaluation outcomes?

How can we measure group community benefits from our services? for example reduction in crime, child abuse, other social problems

How do we make evaluations more learner centered? and participatory?

How does our service alienate our learners from their communities?

Key Concepts

Group A
incremental
ongoing
non-destructive
service
participatory
learner-centered
validate

Group B
individualizing
reflecting multiple backgrounds and
social characteristics

Group D
social impact
program evaluation as opposed to individual evaluation
community benefits
"global" evolution as opposed to competencies
group solidarity of learners
eliminating isolation/separation from communities
larger effects (sometimes unexpected)

Group A
How can we create, standardize and validate better evaluative tools and processes that are learner-centered, non-threatening, non-disruptive and more integrated into the learning process in a multicultural context and reality-based for learners needs/goals?

Group B
How do we determine if program components are integrated and meet our objectives and mission?

Group D
How do we measure the larger impact of our programs on the communities from which the learners come?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Establish a learner/student advisory group that participates in evaluation activities at project and ACBE levels.

Have learners participate in development of evaluation tools and processes for their organizations with assistance from ACBE.

Have ACBE encourage "cross-fertilization" of people from literacy, economic development and leadership development through conferences, workshops and regional meetings.

ACBE should serve as advocate at policy levels to link literacy and issues of community economic development.

ACBE could encourage evaluation tools that link literacy learning with changes in quality of life and community economic development.

ACBE can serve as advocate at program level with position papers, with opportunities for linkages.

ACBE should sponsor meetings that connect people across interest and regions in conferences throughout the year.

Regional members should initiate regional meetings with support of ACBE staff and financial assistance.

ACBE should sponsor regional/national program exchanges or meetings (with support of ACBE staff and financial assistance) across interests that provide for an exchange of skills among members.

RECOMMENDATIONS - PRIORITY

1. Have learners participate in development of evaluation tools and processes for their organizations with assistance from ACBE.

2. Sponsor regional and national meetings and exchanges that will provide cross-fertilization and exchange of skills among members with the support (financial and staff) of ACBE.

3. ACBE could serve as a leader in the field in linking literacy and quality of life issues by encouraging evaluation tools which link literacy and quality of life, writing position papers, and advocating funding priorities at the national level.

Professional Development

CONCERNS

Training trainers from the community.

Need to provide logistical support (childcare, transportation, etc.) to community people to enable them to participate.

Provide practical training skills and information. More relevant tools.

Difficulty in discussing professional needs when the process does not respond to community needs.

Re-training or re-focusing the thinking of existing professionals.

Transfer of ACBE focus from national to local/regional level: develop local leadership, train local trainers.

ACBE's philosophy of training vs. current situation of training

The attitude of we "know" good practice may pose the problem of "elitism." We may shut people out who need it the most.

Train parents to be more involved.

How do we create a certification program that would serve teachers who are newly literate former learners?

Can ACBE train "change agents" or service providers?

Not enough support for training, that is time, money, support at CBOs.

Countering attitude of "We are teachers. Why do we need training?"

Make training an ongoing, collective concern within organization.
Include learners in training, conferences, events.

Have a positive rather than a problem focus.

Need to develop grassroots leadership instead of "outside experts."

Demystify community organizing process

Everyone is an expert.

Pick good trainers to begin with, then develop knowledge, art, style.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Start this recommendation process at beginning of ACBE conference hold through the entire conference, in order to arrive at more detailed and well thought out recommendations.

Develop processes to involve learners, teachers and administrators to achieve an organization's goals.

Deal with obstacles such as child care, transportation, etc.

Professional training is a long term process. It takes years.

Ensure that training is practical and responsive and improves over time.

Core training should be self esteem, communication, decision-making

"Grassroots 101" should include a consciousness-raising self realization session

Working with ACBE members on an on-going training process within on-going activities - literacy, community development, community based colleges.

Pairing teachers to continue training each other: guided peer follow-up training process.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CERTIFICATION PROCESS

ACBE certification process should be consistent with ACBE's principles: low-cost, stipends, etc. Do not eliminate people who do not have prior certification or formal education. Send people through an array of community learning experiences.

ACBE should assert its political/ideological progressive agenda. Educate mainstream certifiers.

Long term training should incorporate information, practical training and consciousness-raising. It should be provided in three areas:

1. Literacy
2. Community Organizing
3. Community Economic Development

It should lead to certification and link these three areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS - PRIORITY

ACBE needs to involve learners, teachers and programs in developing a philosophy of critical education. ACBE's activities (eg. training, conferences, certification) should be consistent with this philosophy and model the development process.

Program and Institutional Support

CONCERNS

Use of ACBE database - how to improve it, encourage CBO's to use it

Isolation of programs

Need to tie educational programs to unions

Inability to take advantage of technical assistance because of inappropriate language

Match between needs and technical assistance

Organizational development

Making institutions more proactive

How to get involved in advocacy

How to take a more global perspective

Human resource development/Staff retention

Funding

Developing a common language

How to develop local networks

Regional meetings

Building in money (in proposals/grants) for allowing regional meetings

Access to sources of information

How to practice what you preach

Involvement in a political debate

Educating and advocating for policy

PRIORITIES

Attend to policy/advocacy issues

Networking/Information/Linkages

Technical Assistance/Program Support/Training and Development

Funding

RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy/Advocacy

ACBE lobbyist should be more accessible to members, some line of communication could be set up between members and lobbyist.

Improve the sharing of information about legislation and policy issues.

Enable local groups to advocate for their needs and use policy legislative information.

Develop list of resources that provide information on policy/legislative issues.

ACBE should participate in creating policy debate on issues important to CBO's.

Networking/Linkages/Information Sharing

ACBE could help to fund the cost of attending regional meeting among members.

Disseminate information and models on how to develop local networks.

Create a national network of CBO's - ACBE to expand membership.

Encourage cross-constituency collaboration - strategize, facilitate, state importance of communication and collaboration between CBO's and other non-CBO's working in communities.

Improve use of ACBE database.

Emphasize the importance of ourselves as a network - facilitate impromptu networking at conference by having registrants identify themselves prior to the conference.

Restructure the annual conference so that there is less emphasis on workshops and more emphasis on developing an agenda and delving into selected issues affecting CBO's.

Program Support/Training & Development

Formalize human resources development - personnel development, staff training

Provide appropriate technical assistance sensitive to the needs and goals of CBOs

Facilitate exchanges between program staff, "peer-coaching", internships for staff

ACBE to provide funds for student/community/practitioner communication

Emphasize learner involvement in all aspects and areas of activity.

Funding

Provide technical assistance and models of how to obtain/utilize funding - update ACBE corporate/foundation directories

Create new and diverse sources of funding

Effect social policy

Salaries and the retention of staff - Place a greater emphasis on the value of work and the people doing the work, fair salaries, support for staff and benefits should be a priority

Promote public awareness of issues

Survey Results: What You Had to Say

We received conference evaluation forms from about 20-25% of those who attended ACBE's 14th annual conference, **Investing in People.** The 24 respondents averaged 9 years in community based education, 17 were white, 2 were black, and 1 Chicano; 15 were female, and 5 were male. (Note: not all respondents answered these questions.)

Overall the comments were extremely positive; many workshops were praised in terms of content, facilitator, and their participatory formats. The responses are summarized below. If you attended the conference and an item or issue you feel strongly about is not represented here, please let us know. Your comments are invaluable as we plan for next's conference and to our ongoing work as a national association.

Some Suggestions for Next Year:

(1) More information on participants in the registration packet
(2) More community leaders, assistant teachers, and learners present and integral to the program; inclusion and outreach to more and different kinds of providers
(3) More time to reflect on alternative practices
(4) Information on workshops' content prior to the conference
(5) More shared meals and evening activities; an initial get acquainted (personalized) activity
(6) Child Care
(7) Hold the conference in a state park
(8) Reformat the conference so that working groups can form on the first day and regroup for several hours each day of the conference. This format was suggest to facilitate in-depth skills development and training

Please look carefully at the following list of suggested workshops. Would you or someone you know be willing to facilitate a session?

Suggested Workshops

Popular Theatre
More on hiring and recruiting people of color
How to build coalitions
Native Language; ESL
Linking literacy and economic development
Youth
Issues of white rural folks
Housing models
Session for WASPS who administer programs for "minorities"
Training: problem posing techniques
Training: participatory management
Community Building

Criticisms

No pool
No childcare
The Business Meeting felt "oppressive"; folks felt it could have been explained better and also that it should be done earlier in the program
Hotel too expensive
Too much time on ACBE agenda, more time for participants to exchange info., pedagogy, ideas, and build skills.
Too long
Workshops should be "shorter 1 1/2hr so I can attend more"
No desks to write on

Praise

In general, respondents praised the conference organization overall, the quality of facilitators, the materials display, the keynote presentation, the geographic and racial diversity, 3-hour workshops, open discussion format, and the closing session.

No workshop received a poor review. Those that were enjoyed the most were generally three hours in length and provided the opportunity--through activities (drawing, building sculptures, etc.) and discussion--for participants to get to know each other, to reveal themselves on a more personal level, and to discuss who they are in relationship to their work.

A New Design for the 90s

In response to views expressed during the conference, on the evaluation forms, and at the closing session, we are totally restructuring the conference format. Tentatively the new design will include an opening plenary, working groups of 5-15 people that choose a particular topic/issue to explore for about 3 hours per day each day of the conference, and workshops. More information on the new format and a call for facilitators will be announced in ACBE's newsletter, CBER, in early 1990 and mailed to ACBE members and '89 conference attendees.

As always we welcome your feedback. It's still not too late to return your evaluation form or drop us a note.

Other Comments

"Presenters really knew their stuff and were responsive to the participants"

"Issues of Power in Leadership Development created a forum that enabled such open, honest discussion, allowing people to speak out. It was--the session--empowering itself."

"Recruitment and Retention, Stephanie and Sandra, got into real stuff!"

"Jovita on Community Issues--video and participatory methods, great!"

"So much discussion and sitting is problematic. I challenge ACBE to challenge presenters to be more participatory and consider doing more than discussion"

"Diversity in CBOs-race, gender, sexual identity are keys to understanding leadership and it was marginal this year"

"Race, sex, and gender issues need to be presented in an explicit way. How are different races involved in the power structures of CBOs? Who makes decisions?"